

2500 BC		Cities built in the Indus Valley	1700 BC	1500 BC
People move from hills to Indus Valley		2000 BC	Farming disrupted	Aryan invasion - Indus Valley civilization dies

Around 2500 BC, people who were living in the mountains and foothills of the Himalayas began to move down to the fertile plain of the **INDUS** (IN duhs) **River Valley**, in what is now Pakistan and western India. These people developed a civilization that rivaled that of Egypt in its sophistication.

Memories of these people were kept alive by oral traditions, but their story was lost to historians until about 1920, when archaeologists began to discover remains of almost 100 cities throughout the Indus Valley. One of the first cities to be excavated is called *Harappa*, so the people of the Indus Valley are sometimes referred to as the *Harappa Civilization*.

The Indus Valley civilization thrived for almost a thousand years. It began to decline about 1700 BC when the Indus River changed direction. Another major river, the Hakra, dried up and the farming economy was damaged. It is believed that sometime around 1500 BC the Aryans, people from the north, invaded the Indus Valley, bringing about the end of this civilization.

WHAT MADE THEM SPECIAL

- The earliest known civilization in south Asia.
- Designed cities on a grid pattern with complex drainage and sewage systems.
- The first to cultivate cotton, which they spun and wove into colorful cloth.

LAW/GOVERNMENT

Very little is known of the legal or administrative aspects of the Indus Valley civilization. They must have been highly organized in order to design and build the large, well-planned cities that have been found, and to staff the huge cooperative granaries in the cities.

CITIES

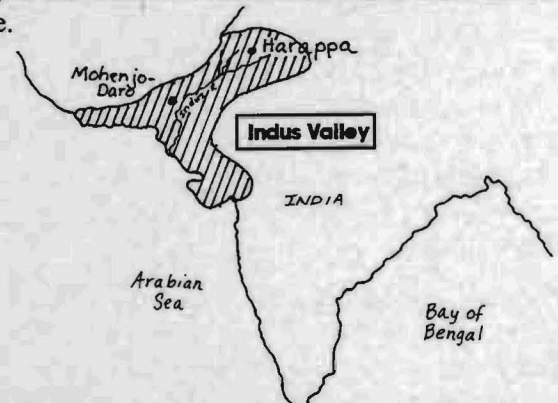
- **Harappa** - one of the major cities, measuring about three miles across.
- **Mohenjo-Daro** - the largest settlement (35,000 people), a major commercial center and possibly the capital. Remains of a large public bath-house have been excavated here.

TRANSPORTATION/TRADE

Cattle were used as beasts of burden and to pull wagons loaded with grain and other crops. River boats as well as pack animals may have been used for transporting goods. Trade was carried out between cities and farming communities. In addition, goods such as copper, stone, ivory, wood, and animals were exported to other parts of India, Afghanistan, Persia, and Mesopotamia.

WRITING/LITERATURE

From the pictographic (picture) writing found on seals, we know that the Indus Valley people had a unique system of writing. It has not yet been translated. No lengthy documents have been found, which probably means that they used a form of paper that has not survived the years. Accurate, consistent sets of weights for balance scales were made from cubes of stone.



LOCATION: on the banks of the Indus River in what is now Pakistan and western India.



ARTS & CRAFTS

The most interesting creations of Indus Valley artisans are small "seals," inscribed with the picture of an animal and some pictographic characters. These seals were two or three inches square, made of soapstone. They were probably used to make an impression in wet clay as a mark of ownership, or as trademarks by merchants. Each important person would have had his or her own identifying mark.

The Indus Valley people also made small statues from alabaster or marble, often in the shape of animals such as monkeys or squirrels. They used clay to make figures of women wearing nothing except a headdress. These probably represented a fertility goddess.

The people used a pottery wheel to make very strong vessels and containers of high quality. Much of the pottery was painted a bright red with designs in black.

From copper, bronze, silver and gold they made jewelry and ornaments, as well as useful objects like pots, pans, and tools. Many dice were made, to be used in the popular pastime of gambling. Ceramic toys represented daily activities such as hauling grain. Fine furniture was inlaid with ivory.

ARCHITECTURE

The Indus Valley people built their cities on a gridiron plan with some large public buildings and many smaller buildings. Buildings were made of mud bricks, sometimes coated with plaster, and placed on brick platforms to keep them dry in times of flooding. There was a complicated sewer and drainage system throughout the city, allowing people to dispose of trash and waste in a sanitary manner, washed out through covered drains.

Cities had two sections: a religious and governmental center, which was sometimes surrounded by a wall, and a commercial and residential center. Each of these sections was built on a large mound, with the government section always being on the higher mound, to the west of the residential center. A huge granary that stored grain for the entire city occupied a central

position. A public bathhouse had a 20x40-foot pool made watertight by a double floor with a layer of bitumen (a type of asphalt used as a cement and mortar) between two layers of bricks.

Houses were built on zigzag lines, possibly to block the wind. A granary worker might have had a two-room cottage. Other houses were larger, some with two stories. They had no windows opening to the street, but had several rooms opening on an interior courtyard. A bath and latrine were usually included, with water coming from a well. There was apparently no decoration of homes or public buildings.

RELIGION

The Indus Valley people probably worshipped a fertility goddess, represented by many small statues found in the cities. They also worshipped a horned god who was probably a god of fertility. The bull and some objects such as trees were considered sacred.

The dead were buried in wooden boxes. Pottery bowls and jars were placed in the coffins with them.

CROPS/FOOD

Seasonal flooding of the Indus River brought rich soil for farming, but also forced the people to develop flood control techniques. They constructed irrigation canals for the dry seasons. Farming was done on a large-scale communal system. Grain was collected into huge granaries in the cities. Some of the crops grown were wheat, barley, melons, peas, and dates. Cotton was also grown, from which cloth was made.

Domesticated animals included cattle, buffalo, donkeys, cats, pigs, goats, and sheep. Chickens were first raised for food in the Indus Valley.

CLOTHING/DRESS

Both men and women wore simple robes of cotton or wool cloth, wrapped around their bodies with one shoulder bare. Both sexes wore large necklaces, earrings and bangles. Some women had elaborate hairdos or headdresses; some wore braids. Men had long hair and some had beards.

SOME IMPORTANT PEOPLE

We do not have the names of any important people.

WEB SITES

Indus Valley Civilization

<http://www.indiagov.org/culture/history/history.htm>

Harappa and the Indus River Civilization

<http://www.harappa.com>

1500 BC	Aryans begin to settle and establish small kingdoms	540 BC	Chandragupta founds Mauryan Empire	261 BC	Fall of Maurya Empire
Nomadic Aryans migrate to Indus Valley	800 BC	Rise of Magadha tribe	321 BC	King Asoka converts to Buddhism	184 BC

The semi-nomadic **ARYAN** (AIR ee uhn) people from eastern Europe began invading the areas which are now Pakistan and India around 1500 BC. The Aryan people lived in separate tribes, which were often at war with one another. Around 540 BC the Magadha tribe became the most powerful and began to rule over its neighbors and extract taxes from them, forming the beginnings of an empire.

In 321 BC, Chandragupta Maurya became the king, establishing the **MAURYA** (MOW ree uh) dynasty. Chandragupta's son and grandson continued to expand the Maurya Empire, which eventually included most of the subcontinent of India. His grandson, Asoka, is the most fondly remembered Mauryan king.

Asoka went to war with neighboring Kalinga and won a successful but bloody battle. Afterwards, he was remorseful over the destruction he had caused and converted to the nonviolent doctrine of Buddhism, a religion which had emerged in India about 200 years earlier. The whole empire benefited from the effects of his conversion, as it resulted in gentler laws and a more peaceful way of life. His style of ruling did not continue after his death, however, and the empire began to disintegrate. In 184 BC the last Maurya king was murdered by his commander-in-chief.

WHAT MADE THEM SPECIAL

- Developed a sturdy wheel with spokes and tamed horses to draw two-wheeled chariots.
- First to unite India under a uniform government.
- Asoka's empire was a rare mix of religious devotion and strong administration.

LAW/GOVERNMENT

The early Maurya government was highly structured and authoritarian, with the state controlling trade and collecting high taxes. Slaves (people captured in battle) worked for the government, supervised by royal inspectors who made sure everyone did as they were told.

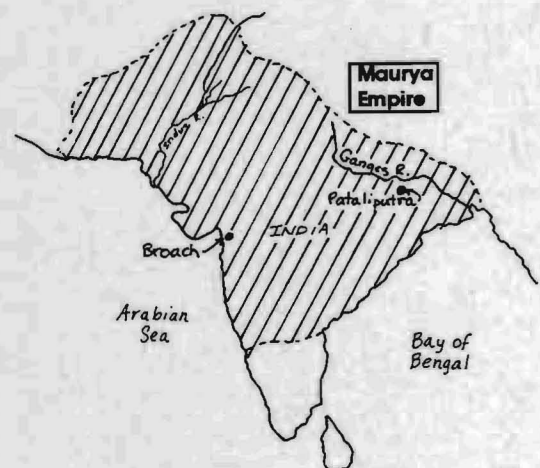
Asoka introduced a legal system based on simple and practical moral principles. He ran his administration efficiently, and allowed more freedom to merchants and tradespeople. He forbade harsh treatment to both people and animals, and built hospitals for both. He did not try to expand his territory by invasion and war, but by offering a society which would encourage others to want to join.

CITIES

- **Broach** - a port city and trade center.
- **Pataliputra** - (now Patna) the capital, on the north bank of the Son River.

TRANSPORTATION/TRADE

The rivers provided a natural highway for trade and transportation. The horse and chariot were also used for transportation, and in war. Goods crafted in the Maurya Empire were traded with people in Mesopotamia, Persia, and Greece.



LOCATION: what is now Pakistan and the northern part of India; during the Maurya Empire, the territory expanded to include almost all of modern India.

WRITING/LITERATURE

The *Vedas*, lengthy and intricate hymns telling the story of the Aryan people, were composed around 1500 BC. They were not written down until centuries later, but were memorized word for word and passed down through generations.

The Aryan people did use writing for other matters as well, and many people were highly educated. The language of the upper classes was *Sanskrit*, an Indo-European language. The dialect that the common people used was called *Prakrit*. One famous document, the *Arthashastra*, is a manual on how to run an empire, and is said to have been written by Chandragupta's assistant, Kautilya.

ARTS & CRAFTS

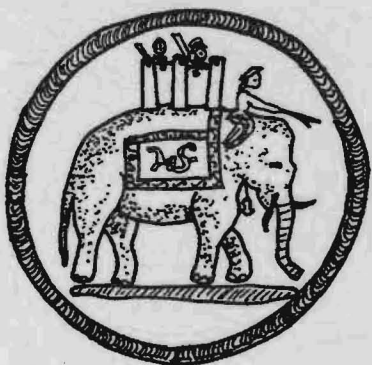
Asoka decreed that a series of edicts be carved on huge sandstone pillars, 40-50 feet tall. These described his newly found religious ideas and how the people were to be treated. A Buddhist theme is also present in sculptures and *bas-reliefs* (flat sculptures) of the time, although Buddha himself is not represented directly but only by symbols or scenes from his life.

Artisans made jewelry of all sorts including earrings, necklaces, gold girdles, bangles, armlets, and anklets. The Aryan people enjoyed music and crafted many instruments: flutes, lutes, harps, cymbals, and drums.

ARCHITECTURE

Early Aryan cities were built using wood, with a surrounding wall, drawbridges, towers, and well-planned streets. The wall around the capital city, Pataliputra, had 570 watchtowers and 64 gates in it.

Houses were usually two or three stories tall. The palace was especially grand, surrounded by a park with gardens and fountains. During Asoka's time, stone began to replace wood as a construction material.



RELIGION

One of the gods that the early Aryans worshipped was Indra, a god of war and sky. Religious leaders were called *Brahmins*. They ranked highest in the society, and helped to enforce the laws of the state. Under the Brahmins in social standing were the *rajās* (ruling princes) and warriors, and beneath them the merchants and peasants, with the servants being the lowest class.

When Asoka converted to Buddhism and installed it as the state religion, he did not force his people to join his practice but allowed varying beliefs to peacefully coexist. He did build Buddhist monasteries and shrines, and sent out missionaries to places as far away as Greece, Egypt and Ceylon.

CROPS/FOOD

The state built extensive irrigation projects which helped Maurya farmers to be very productive. Wheat, rice, barley, meat, wines, and milk were common foods.

The early Aryans raised cattle and sometimes used them as a form of currency. Beef was eaten only on special occasions. During Asoka's reign, vegetarianism was encouraged and less meat was eaten. The horse and later the elephant were tamed by these people.

CLOTHING/DRESS

Both men and women usually wore a length of cloth, draped around the body and over the shoulder and fastened with a belt and pins. In cold seasons, a cloak was added. Men and women wore fancy jewelry and facial cosmetics. Women often had jeweled ornaments on their foreheads and sometimes wore headdresses, veils or tiaras. Men often wore turbans.

SOME IMPORTANT PEOPLE

- **Chandragupta** (king 321-298 BC) - began the Maurya Dynasty and conquered all of northern India.
- **Kautilya** - Chandragupta's assistant.
- **Bindusara** (king 289-272 BC) - Chandragupta's son.
- **Asoka** (king 273-232 BC) - great benevolent sovereign who used Buddhist teachings as the basis for his rule.

WEB SITES

Aryan Civilization

<http://www.indiagov.org/culture/history/history1.htm>

Daily Life in Ancient India

<http://members.aol.com/Donncclass/Indialife.html>

320 AD	Chandra Gupta II expands the empire	Gupta invaded by Huns; empire declines
Chandra Gupta I founds the Gupta Dynasty	375 AD	500 AD
Period of peaceful rule		

The **GUPTA** (GUP tah) empire in India emerged after a period of about 500 years without unified rule. Chandra Gupta I, a member of a wealthy family, founded a new dynasty in the Ganges Valley in 320 AD. His grandson, Chandra Gupta II, expanded the empire to include all of the northern portion of the Indian subcontinent.

The Gupta Dynasty reigned in peace for about 160 years, a time now known as the Golden Age of India. Learning was valued, with mathematics, philosophy, religion, medicine, astronomy, and other sciences being taught by the religious leaders. Gupta scientists advanced the theory that the world was round many centuries before this idea was voiced in Europe. They also made accurate calculations of the length of the year. Mathematicians devised the number system used today, with nine digits and zero, and developed algebra and trigonometry concepts.

Near the end of the fifth century AD, a people called the Huns came down from central Asia, invading India and destroying most of the Gupta cities.

WHAT MADE THEM SPECIAL

- High level of education and learning, including medical knowledge.
- Poets and playwrights were honored in this society.
- Developed the decimal system and the Hindu-Arabic numerals that we use today.

LAW/GOVERNMENT

The Gupta rulers are called emperors, but they exercised only loose control over the people, exacting taxes from them but letting them manage their cities, villages and farms themselves. The government regulated trade and provided water and police service. Private business was encouraged and taxes were relatively low. Punishments for criminals were considered to be light. There was no death penalty; the harshest punishment was to have a hand, nose, or ear cut off.

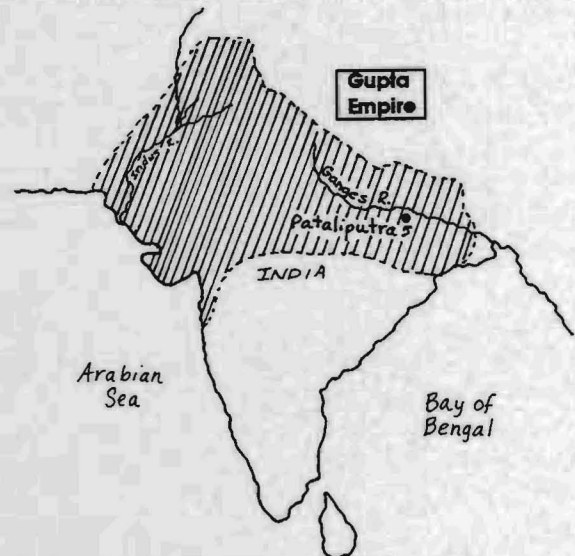
CITIES

- **Pataliputra** - (now Patna), on the north bank of the Son River; once the capital of the Maurya Empire, then the capital of the Gupta Empire.
- **Nalanda** - site of a large Buddhist monastery and university, attended by students from all of Asia.

TRANSPORTATION/TRADE

Elephants, ox-drawn carts, and ships all provided transport for items of trade going to Rome, the Mediterranean, Africa, China, Southeast Asia and Indonesia. Many luxury items were exported, such as gems, pearls, perfumes, pepper, ginger, cinnamon, fine cotton, and teak and ebony timber. Trade guilds developed as craftspeople and merchants grouped together. The cities were places of busy commerce. Gold from Rome, silk from China, and horses from Saudi Arabia were valued imports.

Elephants were also used for military purposes. Military squads made up of one elephant, one chariot, three armored cavalymen, and five foot soldiers patrolled the countryside, ready for battle if needed.



LOCATION: all of northern India.

WRITING/LITERATURE

The language of the kings and upper classes was called *Sanskrit*, an Indo-European language. The lower classes spoke a dialect of Sanskrit called *Prakrit*.

Many great works of poetry and drama were produced during the Gupta Dynasty. Poetry competitions were held. The university at Nalanda had a large library. Kalidasa, a writer later known as the "Indian Shakespeare," wrote many plays and poems. The great epic poems of India, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, were revised and preserved. These works can be read today in English.

ARTS & CRAFTS

The figure of Buddha was portrayed in painting and sculpture, often on a grand scale. Wall paintings, which graced every building in Gupta cities, showed scenes in the life of Buddha. Hindu gods were also a popular theme in sculptures and *bas-reliefs* (flat sculptures).

The skill of the Gupta ironworkers was beyond that of any other civilization until the 19th century. They made useful tools and weapons. A sample of their work still stands in the 23-foot Iron Pillar of Delhi, erected to honor Chandra Gupta II. The pillar is a single piece of solid iron, of such purity that it has not rusted despite more than 1500 years of weather. The casting of such a large, heavy pillar required great engineering skill.

Other metals were used to make jewelry. Beautiful textiles, especially those made from silk, were exported. The music and dance associated today with the classical Indian arts developed during the time of the Gupta empire.

ARCHITECTURE

Gupta towns were constructed with wide, high walls and inner gates. Streets were winding, sometimes paved with cobblestones. Public buildings were usually made of stone or brick, and were richly decorated with gold leaf and silk draperies. The temples, which were small with flat roofs, had ornate pillars decorated with animals and mythological scenes. Some temples were cut into cliff walls; others were freestanding. Houses were commonly made of wood, coated with limestone or plaster and covered with tiles. A typical house had two or three stories, gardens, verandas and balconies.

RELIGION

At the beginning of the Gupta Dynasty, Buddhism was the state religion, although many people still practiced

the traditional religion of Hinduism. During the Gupta reign, Hinduism absorbed some of the characteristics of Buddhism and was revived as the religion of state. Both Buddhism and Hinduism thrived under the Guptas. Particularly emphasized was the Hindu trinity of gods: Brahma (creator), Vishnu (preserver) and Shiva (destroyer).

CROPS/FOOD

Wheat, barley and rice were the staple crops of the people of the Gupta Empire. They also grew sugar cane, gourds, sesame, peas, beans, lentils, spices and fruits. Cotton was grown and used for making textiles.

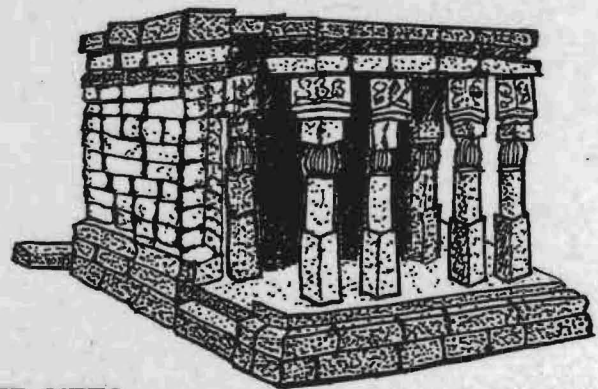
Cattle were used for plowing, transportation, and food, although many devout Hindus and Buddhists did not eat meat. Other domesticated animals included buffalo, goats, sheep, pigs, horses, fowl, and oxen.

CLOTHING/DRESS

A long piece of cloth served as a garment for both men and women. It was placed around the body and over the shoulder, then held in place by a waist belt and pins. For warmth, a cloak was thrown over the shoulders. Men often wore turbans on their heads; women wore veils or fancy headdresses. Jewelry was worn by both men and women. A jeweled ornament on the forehead was common for women.

SOME IMPORTANT PEOPLE

- **Chandra Gupta I** (king 320-330 AD) - had coins made proclaiming himself *Maharajadhiraja* (King of Kings).
- **Chandra Gupta II** (king 380-415 AD) - Chandra Gupta I's grandson; a just and fair ruler of all of northern India, and a patron of the arts.



WEB SITES

Gupta Civilization

<http://www.indiagov.org/culture/history/history3.htm>

Daily Life in Ancient India

<http://members.aol.com/Donncclass/Indialife.html>